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Subsequently, on the ground that M. Meissonier was too old to fight a duel, the belligerant editor challenged Meissonier *fils*. M. Meyer, it is reported, is not unused to challenging his enemies, and he is said to be skilful with the sword and pistol; however, it is not seriously believed that the affair is to have a tragic termination or that any blood will be spilled over it.

The Parisian press has recently published some very curious articles defining the etiquette which should be observed by visitors to France, and French hospitality to foreigners is spoken of in such touching terms that one is almost led to forget that the foreigner is always charged from one hundred to five hundred per cent. more for everything than is asked of a Frenchman.

GOOD WORDS FOR OLD WINTER.

BY T. LACHLAN SMITH.

To the majority of persons, especially those who live and toil throughout the year in the great towns and cities, the advent of the Winter season is anything but cheering. The glad anticipations that mark the approach of the sister seasons are sadly lacking. The bright Summer days are remembered with regret that they are gone, and there is an instinctive shudder at the lengthening wintry shadows, and a shrinking from that icy phantom

"Clothed all in frieze,
Chattering his teeth for cold, that doth him chill,
Whilst on his hoary beard his breath doth freeze;
In his right hand a tipped staff he holds,
With which his feeble steps he stayeth still;
For he is faint with cold and weak with eld,
That scarce his loosed limbs he able is to wield."

This is a picture of old Winter drawn for us as long ago as Spenser's time—to many, no doubt, as true to life as it was to the fancy of the writer of so long ago.

But though from the time of Spenser down, many an icy shaft has been hurled at the drear old figure, still he has not gone all lonely on his cheerless way, nor has he been without enthusiastic friends to sing his praises. Much, indeed, may be quoted in his favor—many a glowing picture presented of his short-lived reign, and many a pleasant time recalled of healthful sport or fireside merrymaking, in which this grim-visaged old fellow has taken his part as one, at least, who seemed to carry beneath his winter frieze a warmer heart than we are prone to credit him with.

At a much later day we have, from the pen of a less distinguished but equally well-known poet, a kindred picture to this of Spenser's, but one withal so different in its warmth of coloring and feeling of sympathy, that we do not hesitate to present it by way of contrast.

"A wrinkled, crabbed man they picture thee,
  Old Winter, with a rugged beard as gray
As the long moss upon the apple tree;
  Blue lipt, an ice-drop at thy sharp blue nose;
Close muffled up, and on thy dreary way,
  Plodding alone through sleet and drifting snows.
They should have drawn thee by the high heapt hearth,
  Old Winter, seated in thy great arm-chair,
Watching the children at their Christmas mirth,
  Or circled by them, as thy lips declare
Some merry jest, or tale of murder dire,
  Or troubled spirit that disturbs the night,
Pausing at times to rouse the smouldering fire,
  Or taste the old October brown and bright."

But we are not compelled to travel all the way from Spenser down to Southey's time, among the poets, to find this genial spirit of discrimination. Take, for example, the winter song in Shakespeare's "As You Like It"—its every line a *motive* for a picture. How charmingly the great bard brings before us, in a few masterly touches, the varied pageantry of a winter's day in the landscape setting of that old Elizabethan period. There is a positive feeling of exhilaration in his lines; we feel the nipping air that is all about us; we follow through the whitened fields the footprints of yon burly hind, and there we see him in the sheltered lee of some rude cairn guarding his fleecy charge, and blowing on his nails to keep his fingers warm.

We see the white roofs of the cottages, peering over the wintry hedge-rows, where

"Birds sit brooding in the snow;"

the quaint old church—with its older trees about it, where on a cold Sunday,

"When all about the winds doth blow,"

you may well believe the cough contagious passing round the little congregation until it

"Drowns the parson's saw."

And the short service over, you may be sure that parson, squire and cottager alike all hurry homeward—even maid Marion scarce lingers on the snowy path for Tom to overtake her, or to show off her latest fineries before her cottage rivals. Perhaps to her, as to the old and gouty squire, the frosty air has little to recommend it, for she, at least, is not likely to forget the rude liberties it takes, when

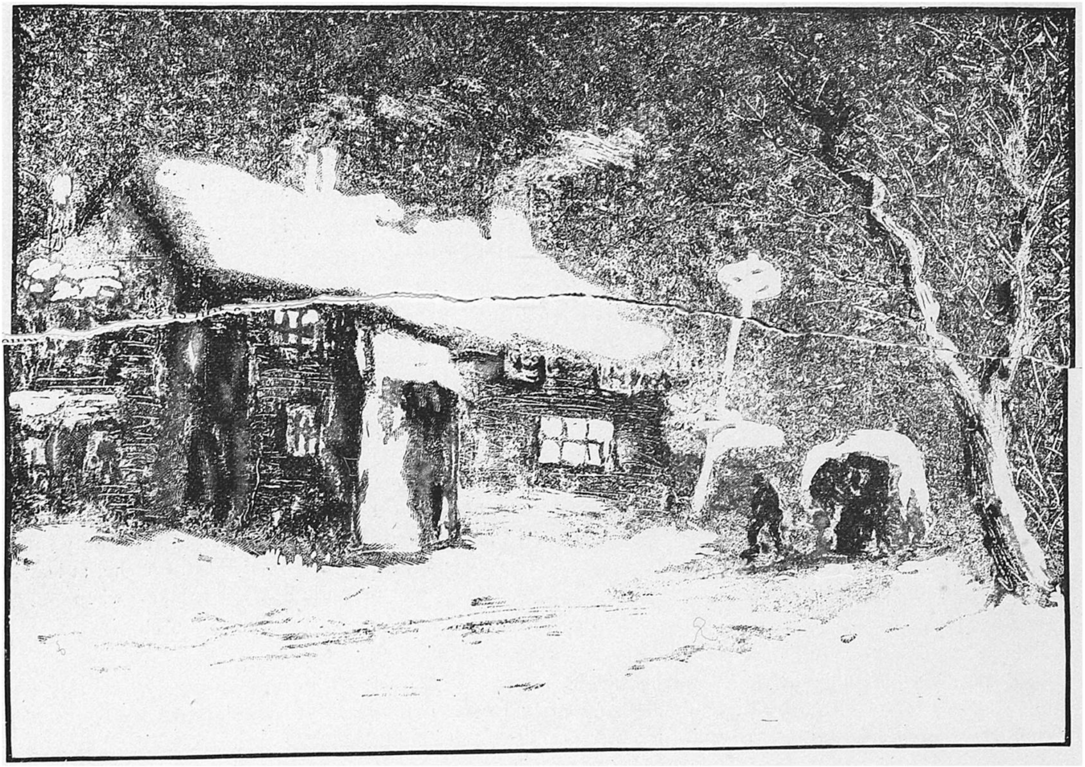
"Milk comes frozen home in pails,
  And Marion's nose is red and raw."

Then comes the last but most genial of this series o suggested pictures, for they are but masterly outlines to be filled in by the imagination of the reader—the short, wintry day draws to its close. By the cheerful hall fire sits our genial old squire, and lying near him on the hearth, his nose resting on his outstretched paws, his sleepy eyes in deep content, blinking at the ruddy flame, is his old and favorite hound. Handy by him he sees the bowl of smoking lambswool, with the roasted crabs hissing hot from the embers bobbing on the surface; the warm glow falls in a genial circle all about the old knight's chair, and while he sips, he listens to the wind without; he hears the merry note of the owl from its perch among the old red chimneys—he notes the various evening occupations of his household, the merry quip, the song or laugh that passes round; he thinks of winters past, and of the Christmas festivities in his hall; in the red embers of the glowing fire he builds no castles for the future, but rebuilds the structures of the past from the memories that fill his mind. He is content and happy in the love and duty of those about him, and his hospitable doors are ever on the latch for the weary or benighted traveler. He sits and sips and smiles in the comfort of this firelight, while without

" The staring owl
Keeps up his merry note,
To whit to whoo,
While greasy Joan doth keel the pot."

We may pass by good old Thomas Tusser, a noted and popular poet of that and the succeeding age. Many quaintly curious pictures he gives us of the winter customs of his time; for the most part, however, relating to the pious rites and observances of the Christmas period. Famous old Ben Jonson, too, has many a pleasant word for what Sackville calls "The cruel season," in a winter poem addressed to Sir Robert Wroth, too long to quote in full; he refers to the out-of-door sports that may be enjoyed on the short, cold days, such as hawking, the hunting of the hare, or shooting of the greedy thrush,

" Thou dost with some delight the day outwear,
Although the coldest of the year."



A WINTRY NIGHT—FROM A DRAWING BY T. L. SMITH.

And what a complete and really captivating picture of the jolly old courtier of the period is that we find in a poem printed in the "Percy Reliques," describing the old squire in his cheerful old home in the winter season—

" With an old study filled full of learned old books,
With an old reverend chaplain, you might know him by his looks
With an old buttery hatch quite worn off the hooks,
And an old kitchen that maintained half a dozen old cooks.

" With an old hall hung about with pikes, guns and bows,
With old swords and bucklers, that had borne many shrewd blows,
And an old frieze coat to cover his worship's trunk hose,
And a cup of old sherry to comfort his copper nose.

" With a good old fashion when Christmas was come,
To call in all his old neighbours with bagpipe and drum,
With good cheer enough to furnish every old room,
And old liquor able to make a cat speak and man dumb."

Among all of the elder poets, perhaps none have equaled that most quaint as well as gifted of singers, Robert Herrick, in his genuine relish for the twilight season of the year. True, his pictures are drawn more from the life of in-doors, as also of the pastimes, feasts and frolics of the ever-joyous yule-tide; but they are so inimitable in character, so redolent of the rustic England of his time—of the observances, customs and peculiar features of old English winters—as to give to his descriptions a value altogether their own. How little like a picture of winter's blustering violence, for instance, is the following, from one of his Christmas carols sung in the presence of the king, while the latter was enjoying himself at Whitehall:

" Why does the chilling Winter's morn
Smile, like a field beset with corn?
Or smell, like to a mead new shorn,
Thus, on the sudden?
Come and see
The cause, why things thus fragrant be:
'Tis He is born, whose quickening birth
Gives life and lustre, public mirth,
To Heaven and the under earth."

In another of his winter pieces, wherein he weaves the ivy and the Christmas holly with his verse, he tells us of the doings in the old Hall down in Devonshire; of how they mingled games such as "blind-man's buff," "fox i' the hole," with many another Christmas gambol, around the wassail bowl. And then as they gather round the hearth to circulate the song or winter tale, he tells them—

" Then as ye sit about your embers,
Call not to mind those fled Decembers;
But think on these, that are t'appear,
As daughters to the instant year:
——— and lay upon
The year, your cares, that's fled and gone."

It is a somewhat long interval from Herrick's time down to that of Cowper, Scott, Wordsworth and the poets of our own immediate day, and were we intent upon weaving a Christmas garland only for old Winter, we could readily close the interval by a goodly show of carols from the poets of the intervening period; but in the brief space allotted to us, we are desirous, in so far as we can, to show our deep respect for all the long months of his reign—from Autumn's sad retirement in the drear November, to the sweet whisperings of the Spring, in April's opening buds and showers. It would certainly be a pleasant task to write of winter in all the warmth one might summon to one's aid in treating of the vernal seasons; but we have no more desire to see our blustering old hero masquerading in summer motley than, without protest, to acquiesce in every cruel taunt and unkind thrust that is made at him. 'Tis true, he comes not to us with autumn's glorious sadness in his eye, or summer's tender wooing in his breath, but now, as mostly ever, in the same rude tattered robe, time-stained and torn by many a rough tempestuous blast; or as Cowper, in "The Task," most ably, if severely, fills in the canvas—

" Thy scattered hair with sleet like ashes filled,
Thy breath congealed upon thy lips, thy cheeks
Fringed with a beard made white with other snows
Than those of age; thy forehead wrapped in clouds.
A leafless branch thy sceptre, and thy throne

A WINTER DAY—FROM A DRAWING BY T. L. SMITH.

> A sliding car, indebted to no wheels,
> But urged by storms, along its slippery way!"

And yet, the poet adds—

> "I love thee still, unlovely as thou seem'st,
> And dreaded as thou art."

It is pleasant to see that the poet, although constrained to give all this severity of line and color to his portrait, can still retain a feeling of tenderness for his snowy-crowned old subject. Nor need we wonder much at this latent feeling in the old poet, for must he not have remembered those experiences of his younger manhood, when out of doors in the crisp December days, breasting the cold north winds with buoyant step, or skate on heel, emulating on the polished ice the concentric swiftness of the swallow in his summer evolutions on the wing? Only those who have the fortitude to step outside the glow and warmth of their winter homes, to face, on snowy uplands or through sheltered dells, the bracing keenness of the frosty winds, can ever know the healthfulness of such a walk, or realize the varied beauties of the landscape at this time of the year. The long continued nightly frosts have hardened all the surface of the ground to the consistency of iron, so that where the snow has left in spots the highways bare, you may hear from afar the ring of ironed hoof or hob-nailed shoe, as team and driver slowly wind their way across the view. You see the white roofs of the village, glinting through the leafless trees; and if, perchance, the bright December sun is out, the old church may catch the passing ray, and the metal weathercock upon the gable-pointed parsonage may shine like burnished steel. All about you in the near field of vision, the hoar-frost decks with silvery hue each thorny bush and tufted clump of withered grass; or, if the passing sunlight shimmers through the winter boughs above your head, it showers crystal sprays upon you, as it glints from stem to bough or through the mazy network of the interlacing twigs. Bright bands of sunshine rest upon the uplands, and edge with silver many a woodland copse or scattered hay-rick lonely in the whitened fields. Extend your walk abroad until the clouds begin to gather in heavy folds about the distant horizon, and the far-off hill-tops lose their outlines in the murky veil; then turning homeward, mark the change, as all the air begins to thicken with the snowy mist. It is a change indeed! for now, but for the tiny wreaths of smoke curling above the cottage roof, it may hardly be distinguished from the blank grey settling down upon it. Near and familiar objects are rapidly losing all likeness to themselves in the thick incumbrance of the hueless air. Already the sound of near approaching wheels is deadened to the ear, while from the nigh copse, the sharp ring of the wood-chopper's axe comes at muffled intervals.

Softly now each tiny flake begins to fall; the school-boy will, ere long, reluctantly forsake his sport upon the village pond; the sportsman his less innocent amusement of the day; the curler only, in his keen enthusiasm, will make good his title to the ice, and hold his own amid the thickening flakes, until the gloom of night has driven him from his merry sport, and all the broad expanse of nature will rest in silent peace within the white folds of the drifting storm. But if the brightest promise of a day may thus, throughout the season, end in many a foul, tempestuous night, let us not forget that summer has her terrors too; her scorching heats and long continued days and nights of feverish drouths, which are no more endurable in their way than winter's rudest cuffs. The winter is as charming to the true lover of nature as is any of the other seasons, and poets have never tuned sweeter lays to summer than those they have penned to celebrate the colder beauties of the winter time.

> "Walk now among the forest trees,—
> Said'st thou that they were stripped and bare?
> Each heavy bough is bending down
> With snowy leaves and flowers—the crown
> Which winter regally doth wear.
>
> "'Tis well—thy summer garden ne'er
> Was lovelier with its birds and flowers,
> Than is the silent place of snow,
> With feathery branches drooping low,
> Wreathing around the shadowy bowers!"

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